
THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AND COUNSELORS IN BIBLIOTHERAPY TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract: This paper examines how bibliotherapy can support the mental well-being of the University of Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) community. During our time at UNIMAS, we observed the positive relationships and collaborations between the university librarians and UNIMAS counsellors and this made us appreciate the supportive services and teams available at the university. In addition to examining its supportive function, this paper also considers the various roles that bibliotherapy can play within the university context. The paper examines how bibliotherapeutic resources are selected and evaluated from the collection of Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Rahman Ya'kub (PeTARY) and how these resources, grounded in established bibliotherapy principles, can support the mental health of the university community and the emerging role of librarians in the profession. In this paper, we attempt to identify bibliotherapy resources that have the potential to produce positive beneficial outcomes for the UNIMAS community, construct a set of conceptual criteria for

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bibliotherapeutic texts selection, and investigate the correlation between library collections, user interaction, user participation, and the extent to which these selections have a meaningful impact. This paper also examines the influence of bibliotherapy on collection development and user engagement and identifies its potential of bibliotherapy to promote the professional development of librarians. The paper further evaluates how AI-enabled tools may enhance library services and improve user satisfaction. This paper demonstrates the impact of bibliotherapy on mental well-being to promote a resilient community and demonstrates the benefits of mixed methods research.

Keywords: bibliotherapy; librarian; counselor; mental health

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana biblioterapi dapat mendukung kesehatan mental sivitas akademika Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Di UNIMAS, kolaborasi positif antara pustakawan dan konselor universitas menunjukkan adanya sistem dukungan profesional yang kuat dalam menunjang kebutuhan emosional mahasiswa. Selain menelaah fungsi biblioterapi sebagai bentuk dukungan psikososial, penelitian ini juga menyoroti berbagai peran strategi biblioterapi dalam konteks layanan perpustakaan akademik. Penelitian ini menganalisis proses pemilihan dan evaluasi sumber daya biblioterapi dari koleksi Perpustakaan Tun Abdul Rahman Ya'kub (PeTARY), serta bagaimana bahan bacaan tersebut, berdasarkan prinsip biblioterapi dapat digunakan untuk mendukung kesehatan mental dan memperkuat peran pustakawan sebagai fasilitator literasi emosional. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi sumber daya biblioterapi yang berpotensi memberikan dampak positif bagi komunitas UNIMAS, menyusun kriteria konseptual pemilihan teks, serta menelaah hubungan antara koleksi perpustakaan, interaksi pengguna, partisipasi pengguna, dan relevansi intervensi yang dihasilkan. Selain itu, artikel ini mengevaluasi pengaruh biblioterapi terhadap pengembangan koleksi dan keterlibatan pengguna, serta menelaah potensinya dalam mendorong pengembangan profesional pustakawan. Penelitian ini juga menilai bagaimana teknologi berbasis kecerdasan buatan (AI) dapat meningkatkan layanan perpustakaan melalui personalisasi dan peningkatan pengalaman pengguna. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa biblioterapi memiliki potensi signifikan dalam memperkuat ketahanan komunitas, sekaligus menegaskan nilai pendekatan *mixed methods* dalam memahami penerapannya di lingkungan akademik.

Kata kunci: biblioterapi; pustakawan; konselor; kesehatan mental

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health concerns remain a critical issue for university students as they navigate increasingly demanding academic environments. The interplay of social situations, the need for self-determination, and demands for high academic performance can lead to a decline in student mental well-being. Thus, the

establishment of appropriate support systems becomes a need. One such support system response is bibliotherapy, which is the purposeful and therapeutic engagement with the mental health literature to provide comfort, insight, and psychosocial healing. This is where the combined roles of librarians and counsellors come into play. Counsellors demonstrate the mental health literature to students, while librarians select and advertise the psychosocial self-help literature.¹ The two can provide the structure needed to support student mental health resilience and emotional well-being.

This paper analyzes the roles of librarians and counselors in implementing bibliotherapy and its potential impact on mental health outcomes. This research analyzes the work of these professionals on the impact bibliotherapy has on the development of library collections, patrons, and the professional development of librarians. Furthermore, this study explores the use of assistive technologies in libraries to enhance user engagement and the overall quality of service. This paper also focuses on the use of assistive technology in libraries to consume and improve the overall quality of service to clients. This paper aims to explain the use bibliotherapy as an invaluable instrument to improve mental health care accessibility in educational institutions in order to improve the health advocacy of university students, in particular UNIMAS students.

Daniel (2023) explains how libraries engage in stress relief through miscellaneous service offerings, including bibliotherapy.² According to the World Health Organization, bibliotherapy is an emerging practice in which clients engage with prescribed reading to address specific psychological concerns. Bibliotherapy is a “growing practice” of patients working with clinicians to engage with chosen books, with pages threaded through with the patient’s own issues and concerns by the prescriber. Great bibliotherapy is not only broad knowledge of reading material, but also the mutual trust established between facilitator and participant. These features are also highlighted in Nazi (2023) in which professional mediation, book-reader matching, and follow-up support are

¹ Melissa Blankstein dkk., “Student Needs are Academic Needs: Community College Libraries and Academic Support for Student Success,” 2019, <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.311913>; Michael T. Kalkbrenner dkk., “Faculty Views on College Student Mental Health: Implications for Retention and Student Success,” *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 2019, 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119867639>.

² Loretta Odiri Daniel, “Bibliotherapy: An Expanded Role for Libraries and Librarians,” *Library Philosophy and Practice*, no. 7957 (2023), <https://shorturl.at/uK24n>.

central to a successful bibliotherapy intervention.³ The librarian's main task is to create and manage self-help sections, classify and catalogue literature according to social needs, and display it attractively for students.⁴

Because bibliotherapy is still relatively new, public understanding remains limited, even among individuals who have recently been introduced to the concept. The lack of clarity surrounding the definition of bibliotherapy has resulted in various services being provided under the same name, leading to confusion among staff who are unsure if they are offering bibliotherapy services despite their awareness.⁵ Additionally, some librarians oppose their participation in bibliotherapy despite its significant public benefits. However, we now know that many librarians are willing to provide mental health related support and services, but they do so with reluctance of being transposed into therapeutic roles in a way that is not part of the professional role. The Libraries for Health (L4H) pilot also revealed that librarians were interested in developing their mental health competencies to enhance the provision of support to their communities, but drew clear lines between facilitative and clinical roles, with an emphasis on providing supportive environments rather than psychological care itself.⁶ Despite the critical role that librarians occupy as the second most active implementers of bibliotherapy, after psychologists, the absence of comprehensive guidelines for selecting appropriate reading materials restricts their effectiveness in addressing the mental, emotional, domestic, and social issues encountered by users. With a robust knowledge of relevant literature, librarians are well-equipped to identify materials that support users facing these challenges.⁷

Bibliotherapy has been well-established and there exists a significant amount of literature surrounding its principles and practices; however, there is a

³ Rummana Nazi et al., "Bibliotherapy-Use of Books for Healing: An Experiential Study to Introduce Bibliotherapy Service in Libraries," *Journal of Information and Knowledge* 60, no. 3 (2023): 209–15, <https://doi.org/10.17821/srels/2023/v60i3/171030>.

⁴ Shifra Baruchson-Arbib, "Of Special Interest Bibliotherapy in School Libraries: An Israeli Experiment," *School Libraries Worldwide* 6, no. 2 (2000): 102–10, <https://doi.org/10.29173/slww7087>.

⁵ Nur Syazwanie Zanal Abidin et al., "Bibliotherapy: Present-Day Marvel in Malaysia," *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal* 7 (2022): 171–76, <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v7iSI10.4117>.

⁶ RAND Corporation, "Supporting Community Mental Health in Libraries: A Toolkit for Implementing Evidence-Based Approaches," 2025, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/tools/TLA3500/TLA3597-1/RAND_TLA3597-1.pdf.

⁷ Sajeewanie D. Somaratna, "Student Counsellors' Perception on Initiating Bibliotherapy Service in the University Environment," *Journal of the University Libraries Association of Sri Lanka* 24, no. 2 (2021): 27–56, <https://doi.org/10.4038/jula.v24i2.8046>.

distinct lack of attention given to certain facets associated with this theory, which (in this case) are the implications of reading, the presence (actual or symbolic) of a secondary figure (librarian, therapist, companion), the emotions that are triggered/motivated, and the specifications pertaining to the reading material (fiction vs. nonfiction).⁸ More recent research has examined the relationship between the visual arts and well-being, while far less attention has been placed on the written arts.⁹ In spite of the large volume of health-related questions posed to public libraries, the ability to promote health and well-being has largely been overlooked by public policy.¹⁰

Libraries contribute positively and significantly to mental health support. Based on research that analyzes public libraries as ideal reflection and restorative spaces, public libraries are starting to be perceived as civic anchor institutions.¹¹ Libraries support students, and this support increases when students are in high-stress situations.¹² In high-stress situations, such as when students are in university libraries, students often exhibit anxiety-related behaviors. In these situations, one of three students has unmet mental health needs, reflecting a high rate of mental health service unutilization. Librarians can address this especially in their one-on-one, informal settings and through everyday interactions as they can tie students to mental health resources, especially through bibliotherapy.¹³ Bibliotherapy has been around since ancient Greek and Roman times as the practice of using literature to provide feedback, support, and guidance through

⁸ Kathleen Wenger, "Bibliotherapy: A Librarian's Concern," *The Australian Library Journal* 29, no. 3 (1980): 134–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049670.1980.10755417>.

⁹ Brianna O. Malyn et al., "Reading and Writing for Well-Being: A Qualitative Exploration of the Therapeutic Experience of Older Adult Participants in a Bibliotherapy and Creative Writing Group," *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 20, no. 4 (2020): 715–24, <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12304>.

¹⁰ John Hudson, "Books on Prescription: The Role of Public Libraries in Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing," *Journal of Geriatric Care and Research* 6, no. 2 (2019): 47–52; Morgan M. Philbin et al., "Public Libraries: A Community-Level Resource to Advance Population Health," *Journal of Community Health* 44, no. 1 (2019): 192–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-018-0547-4>; Judith Shipman and Laura McGrath, "Transportations of Space, Time and Self: The Role of Reading Groups in Managing Mental Distress in the Community," *Journal of Mental Health* 25, no. 5 (2016): 416–21, <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638237.2015.1124403>.

¹¹ Philbin et al., "Public Libraries: A Community-Level Resource to Advance Population Health"; Ajit K. Pyati, "Public Libraries as Contemplative Spaces: A Framework for Action and Research," *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association* 68, no. 4 (2019): 356–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2019.1670773>.

¹² Heather Stringer, "Libraries as Mental Health Hubs," *Monitor on Psychology* 51, no. 3 (2020): 26.

¹³ ProQuest, "How Academic Libraries Support Student Mental Health," 2024, <https://shorturl.at/VcouY>.

reading. Self-help bibliotherapy has been shown to provide a plethora of benefits, especially for individuals who are depressed. A review of the literature found that bibliotherapy in a self-help context was both cost-effective and had a positive impact on decreasing depression.¹⁴

Numerous studies illustrate the accomplishment of the collaboration of healthcare services and public libraries in the implementation of bibliotherapy programs. In one such program, healthcare workers were able to prescribe self-help reading materials and facilitate participants' recovery.¹⁵

It has been demonstrated that reading groups, as well as social contact, can create a community and a sense of belonging, and this is especially useful for people with mental health problems.¹⁶ Enhanced social interaction, boosted self-esteem, and greater interest in reading for pleasure were reported by these members of the groups. It is possible to contact with fiction in the supportive settings, which is the one necessary therapeutic means of confronting the negative emotions that has been absent in the therapeutic techniques based solely on rigid negative thinking.¹⁷ It has also been demonstrated that bibliotherapy, and in particular the group of one for the creation and discussion of fiction and poetry, has a positive influence on mental health.¹⁸

Expanding the scope of bibliotherapy applies also to the books that lessen the sense of isolation or bring comfort to one's state of mind.¹⁹ This thinking is consistent with Daniel's (2023) findings of reading, as a therapeutic practice, to foster the handling of numerous emotional challenges.²⁰ Furthermore, creative

¹⁴ M. R. Gualano et al., "The Long-Term Effects of Bibliotherapy in Depression Treatment: Systematic Review of Randomized Clinical Trials," *Clinical Psychology Review* 58 (2017): 49–58, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.09.006>.

¹⁵ Grainne McKenna et al., "Patients' and Providers' Perspectives on Bibliotherapy in Primary Care," *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy* 17, no. 6 (2010): 497–509, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.679>.

¹⁶ Anita Phul et al., "Wellbeing through Reading: The Impact of a Public Library and Healthcare Library Partnership Initiative in England," *Evidence-Based Library and Information Practice* 19, no. 2 (2024): 74–93, <https://doi.org/10.18438/ebliip30475>.

¹⁷ Shipman and McGrath, "Transportations of Space, Time and Self: The Role of Reading Groups in Managing Mental Distress in the Community."

¹⁸ David Fearnley dan Grace Farrington, "Reading and Psychiatric Practices," dalam *Reading and Mental Health*, ed. oleh Josie Billington (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21762-4_14.

¹⁹ Keri McCaffrey, "Bibliotherapy: How Public Libraries can Support their Communities' Mental Health," *Dalhousie Journal of Interdisciplinary Management* 12, no. 1 (2016): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.5931/djim.v12i1.6452>.

²⁰ Daniel, "Bibliotherapy: An Expanded Role for Libraries and Librarians."

bibliotherapy has improved emotional literacy and resilience.²¹ Potential and challenges of bibliotherapy converge in libraries. Deficiencies about bibliotherapy, and its forms, offer an ample spectrum of ambiguity for library personnel.²² The bibliotherapy for wellbeing is recognized by library practitioners; however, they are non-clinical and, therefore, their obligations are limited to par non medical tasks: distributing reading materials, facilitative guidance, and reflection.²³ To enhance the bibliotherapy in libraries, more extensive frameworks for training and specifying reading materials are fundamental.

The bibliotherapy promotion through workshops, thematic sessions, and resource creation is a collaborative work of counsellors and librarians. This aligns with a study by Suprafti and Amio (2023), which discussed that bibliotherapy may be used and combined with librarian assisted lesson for program implementation, and designed to relieve students' stress through reading pattern and through reflective writing.²⁴ The success of promoting student well-being is evident in their involvement in planning, leading sessions, and choosing the reading for discussion. This study shows that students get to experience a balanced approach to a range of issues when librarians and counsellors work together and enhance student bibliotherapy experience within synchronised session, thematic activities, and the provision of engaging resources. Morin and LaVertu (2025) on the other hand, mentioned that bibliotherapy initiatives led by librarians can enhance counselling services by offering calm, reflective environments that support emotional well-being. Initially developed through collaborations between libraries and physicians, bibliotherapy has since evolved to include educational contexts, where it is jointly implemented by librarians and counsellors.²⁵ The study focuses on how promoting bibliotherapy becomes much easier with collaborative efforts on designed wellness programs, thematic

²¹ Leny Latifah, "Bibliotherapy for Emotional Literacy," *GUIDENA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Psikologi, Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24127/gdn.v9i1.1537>.

²² Abidin et al., "Bibliotherapy: Present-Day Marvel in Malaysia."

²³ Rebecca A. Morin and Amy E. LaVertu, "Bibliotherapy for Stress Management: A Wellness Intervention for First-Year Medical Students," *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 113, no. 2 (2025): 158–67, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2025.1830>.

²⁴ Wiwik Suprafti and Angelica Dizon Amio, "Online Bibliotherapy to Help Manage Stress and Anxiety of Students During Pandemic: Librarians and Guidance Counselors Collaboration," *Proceedings of The 15th International Conference on Humanities, Psychology and Social Sciences*, 2023, 41–55, <https://doi.org/10.33422/15th.hpsconf.2023.05.104>.

²⁵ Morin and LaVertu, "Bibliotherapy for Stress Management: A Wellness Intervention for First-Year Medical Students."

activities, and the creation of bibliographic resources. Bekius (2022) states how the reinforcing impact of collaborative work from systematic professional training aligns with the effectiveness of bibliotherapy.²⁶ The study shows how counselors seamlessly incorporate bibliotherapy with reading themes in the classroom and through classroom collaborations. It further suggests expanding bibliotherapy training and initiative systematic training and workshops to counselors and librarians promoting bibliotherapy through themed activities and resource creation to enhance students' emotional wellness.

Pettersson (2021) stated that the use of bibliotherapy for personal development along with mental wellness would be greatly appreciated with the use of interactive engagement activities.²⁷ The use of Postpartum mental health has shown that collaborative methods can be used for the social and emotional wellness of participants.²⁸ The use of bibliotherapy is a complement to therapy and is easily accessible. With the integration of imaginative collaboration of health service professionals and librarians the community health can be significantly improved. Not much bibliotherapy has been done and that is why the focus of bibliotherapy improved the mental wellbeing of people for the research to be done for implementation to be used to help those people to ease their mental health issues.

We intend to study concepts of bibliotherapy in the context of the university library to bolster mental health bibliotherapy and resource engagement among the university community. The aims of the study include the following:

1. Present the most relevant issues regarding the selection and organization of bibliotherapeutic materials for the university community.
2. Present the main issues surrounding the identification... selection of relevant reading materials to be used in the practice of bibliotherapy.
3. Examine the impacts bibliotherapy might have on the collection building practices in the university library.
4. Examine how bibliotherapy practices could potentially contribute to building the mental health of the university population.

²⁶ Jackelyn Bekius, "Bibliotherapy in the School Setting: A Study of How and Why School Counselors Utilize Books with Students" (PhD Thesis, St. Cloud State University, 2022), https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cpcf_etds/96.

²⁷ Cecilia Pettersson, "'Another Way to Talk About Feeling Bad': Creative Interactive Bibliotherapy - A Complement to Treatment for Women with Mental Illness After Childbirth," *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 35, no. 1 (2021): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2021.2004369>.

²⁸ Ibid.

5. Explore how bibliotherapy partnerships that foster participation within the university population change the roles and competencies of librarians.
6. Examine the role of AI-based systems in enhancing the access, customization, and effectiveness of a library in the experience of the user.

The objectives drafted align with the following research questions:

1. What are the guiding principles when selecting and curating bibliotherapeutic materials for the university community?
2. What principles affect the Choosing and the guiding selection of books to be used in bibliotherapy?
3. What impact does bibliotherapy have on the collection development practices in the university library?
4. What impact does the bibliotherapy practice have on the promotion of mental well-being in the university community and on its proposed interventions?
5. In what way do bibliotherapy partnerships affect and transform the roles of librarians in the community, particularly in their promotion and engagement activities?
6. What is the function of Artificial Intelligence in improving the library experience for users in terms of accessibility, customisation, and efficacy?

The study is significant for several reasons, which include community well-being, bibliotherapy, collection development, evidence-based practices, professional growth of librarians and counselors, enhanced library services with the aid of artificial intelligence, community support, and community engagement. This study intends to benefit the university community, particularly the mental well-being of the students and the faculty, by determining the types of literature that are useful.

Enhancements made in the university facilities can contribute to the students' academic success and social life as well as to the betterment of their lives as a whole and enjoyment of the university life.

Moreover, the formulation of criteria to choose suitable bibliotherapy books will help librarians devise strategies for effective collection. Such a strategy is expected to optimize collection better, increase therapeutic value of the library, and provide libraries' clientele responsive and appropriate therapeutic complements. In addition, the better understanding of the impact of bibliotherapy on library collections will assist librarians in revising their acquisition plans. This revamping of strategies will help libraries to target certain

genres and/or topics and themes, which will help the target community, and subsequently optimize the value of library services.

Assessing the effects on mental health of bibliotherapy in the first place would provide empirical evidence to support integration of bibliotherapy into the mental health initiatives at universities. Such an assessment would lead to a higher level of acceptance and use of library resources to support bibliotherapy, thereby improving mental health support services. The assessment of the effects of bibliotherapy on the roles and skills of librarians would also highlight the need for more training and professional development. The study would help design educational programs aimed at equipping librarians to better support and serve the university community by determining the new skills and competencies needed. The assessment of AI-assisted technologies in improving user satisfaction would provide a foundation for the incorporation of technology in library services. Innovations resulting from this research would improve user satisfaction and promote interaction with library services and resources. Libraries would become more user-friendly and accessible. The research would open new avenues to enhance the integration of libraries.

The research is directed towards understanding how libraries engage in bibliotherapy. More bibliotherapy research is required. The proposed research is therefore pursuing different theories of bibliotherapy. It is researching the place of bibliotherapy in public service and the implications of incorporating bibliotherapy in contemporary public services. The study will assess the theories bibliotherapy as applied in public libraries and the implications of public libraries in the community as educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study will apply qualitative and quantitative approaches in different phases of the research. The first phase focuses on collecting quantitative data through a questionnaire distributed to members of the university community. The questionnaire will present educational and mental distress issues. The feedback will serve as a guide towards the qualitative phase. The feedback will be analyzed descriptively, where the researcher will identify the general trend of the feedback, then, employ statistical tests of correlation, ANOVA and regression to determine association and significant variables. The second phase will be qualitative, and it will entail the collection of data through semi-structured interviews.

The interview data are analyzed using narrative analysis to identify recurring themes and participant narratives. Integrating both phases enables the study to produce a more nuanced and robust interpretation of the findings. By combining the two phases, this study gave a more nuanced and reliable explanation.

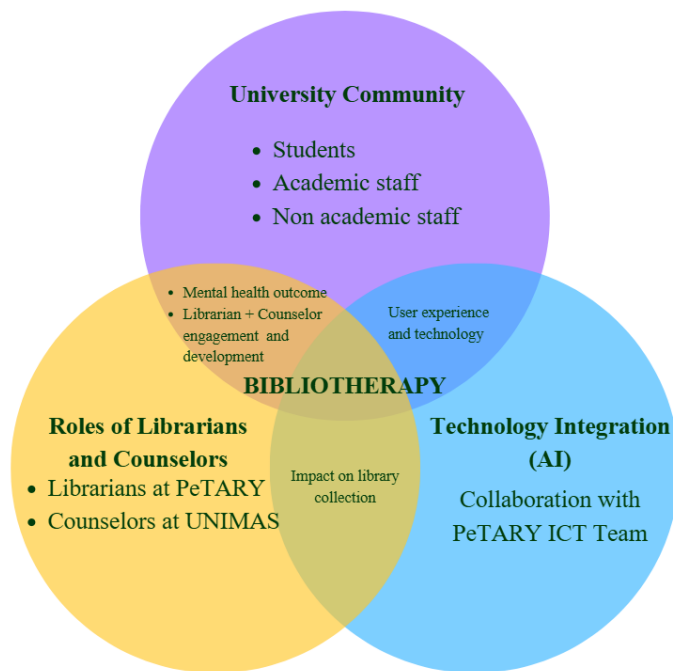


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework for AI-enhanced User Experience in Library Services

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2025

The conceptual framework also demonstrates the relationships among three key dimensions of this study, namely the university environment, the functions of librarians and counsellors, and Technology Integration (AI), with bibliotherapy crucial to all of them. It illustrates a multi-dimension intervention, incorporating human, institutional, and technological-level factors in order to promote the development of bibliotherapy in academia.

Students, academic staff and non-academic staff at the university community are potential primary targets for bibliotherapy programs. The data they provided contributes to understanding engagement, perception and relevance or bibliotherapy to mental health. Both the librarian at the UNIMAS library, and counsellor at UNIMAS promote working together professionally through bibliotherapy as they co-manage material curation, guided reading and reflective activities in such a way that both informational and emotional needs

are catered. On the other hand, the technology integration (AI) stream focuses on using digital and AI tools that will help in increasing availability and customization of content related to bibliotherapy and provide better user experience and support through engagement with the library ICT team.

Bibliotherapy is where these elements intersect, which is defined as a relational intervention that is collaborative and mediated by technology to facilitate emotional well-being through increasing user engagement and for collection development in libraries. This thematic focus highlights how bibliotherapy can be a transformative service innovation and professional development for librarians and counsellors alike.

Consistent with this structure, a two-phase mixed method design is utilised in the research. This part of the study consisted of two complementary parts. One of the parts focused on gathering quantitative data to inform the study. In this case, a survey was given to the entire population of the university. From this, the researcher was able to do descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis, and use variance and regression analysis to identify patterns and relationships among the variables. The second part of this phase of the study was qualitative. In this part, the researcher was able to do semi-structured interviews to gain a more sophisticated view of the professional and collaborative work experiences of the studied subjects (workplace interactions), and this was carried out using narrative analysis. In this way, the two phases of the study offered a developing multilevel perspective on the university's bibliotherapy concepts, technology, and people.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Library Perspective

Shift in information seeking behaviour are increasingly evident within digital library environments. With the advancement of technology, digital materials have made information available in various formats. As a result, there has been a reliance on print collections and an increase in the use of digital libraries.²⁹ These technological developments require libraries to reassess their

²⁹ Steve H. Ching dan Michael Hsiao, "Impact of the E-Book on Total Circulation Transactions - A Case Study for Hong Kong Academic Libraries," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 39, no. 1-2 (2015): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649055.2015.1108760>; Lisa M. Rose-Wiles dkk., "Read in or Check out: A Four-Year Analysis of Circulation and In-House use of Print Books," *Library Publications*, no. 165 (2020): 1-40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102157>; J. Cory Tucker, "Collection Assessment of Monograph Purchases at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

service models and user engagement strategies to understand how they may best provide services that are use responsive and behaviorally informed.

These shifts can be conceptualized through the lens of Information Search Behavior (ISB) theory. ISB posits that an information user identifies, searches, and utilizes information, interpreting it in a manner to suit their cognitive or emotional needs. Thus, studying borrowing and resource utilization patterns is not simply a descriptive exercise. It is an inquiry into the fundamental essences of the user's purpose, desire, and impact of the environment on their behavior. Applying ISB principles allows libraries to design collection and services that align with user's cognitive, emotional, and contextual needs.

Numerous examples related to Information Seeking Behavior (ISB) exist in the literature. Walters (2020) documented that materials selected by librarians circulate more and aligns with ISB mediation by knowledge and user relevance.³⁰ Furthermore, Yang investigated a variation in the frequency of borrowing on the level of the Dewey Decimal Classification and found that users preferred the reflective domains of literature, art, and philosophy, while the scientific materials were, as ISB explains, underused due to unavailability or high difficulty.³¹ In addition, Tae and Jae (2021) documented that borrowing decreased even when the user base remained the same.³² This change is explained by the tendency of people to turn away from cultivating traditional reading habits toward immediacy and convenient digital information-seeking.

Further expanding on these ideas, the addition of Bibliotherapy with AI Chatbots in access to information services in a library could be seen as a logical extension of the ISB model. Information use is enhanced by Bibliotherapy on the affective use through reflection and engagement with the emotion of the processes or content.

AI technologies can enhance users cognitive engagement by providing personalized, content-aware, and interactive recommendations. Such a synthesis hypothetically turns libraries into unified pedagogical ecosystems for a mentally,

Libraries," *Collection Management* 34, no. 3 (2009): 157–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01462670902962959>.

³⁰ William H. Walters et al., "Library Book Selection Decisions and Selectors' Effectiveness: Differences among Librarians, Faculty, and Students," *College & Research Libraries* 81, no. 4 (2020): 617, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.81.4.617>.

³¹ Ji-Ann Yang, "Analysis of Concentrations of Loans by Using Book Circulation Data in Korea University Library," *Publications* 8, no. 4 (2020): 53, <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications8040053>.

³² Tae Ho Lee and Jae Woo Lee, "Self-Organized Human Behavioral Patterns in Book Loans from a Library," *Physica A* 563 (2021): 125473, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physa.2020.125473>.

physically, and emotionally balanced, inquiring citizen-learner with information behavior patterns that therapeutically and autonomously self-direct.

The goal of this study is to help users better address their bibliotherapeutic needs by increasing the diversity of their pattern of use and the extent of their use of library resources through the use of bibliotherapy and AI-based systems, specifically chatbots. This is where the counselling component becomes essential, as it ensures that bibliotherapy is applied safely and appropriately.

AI ChatBot Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Malik (2021) state that mental health apps offer support and treatment to those unable to access mental health services traditionally.³³ These apps are important to mental health care as they offer alternative means to therapy and are able to offer therapeutic resources to those in need.

For purposes of counselling, the chatbot employs Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which new meta-analytic data confirms to still be one of the most efficient forms of psychological treatment, as it offers therapy to multiple issues including depression and anxiety. It has been proven that CBT yields positive change and improvement in one's quality of life, and is on par with most other psychotherapy or medicinal treatment options, and even surpasses some.³⁴ This principle is what makes CBT exceptional and versatile to be included in most if not all AI powered mental health technologies. Taking that as a base, Batyrkhan Omarov (2023) of Suleyman Demirel University in Kaskelen, Kazakhstan, and the Academy of Logistics and Transport in Almaty, Kazakhstan, developed an AI-based mobile chatbot designed to be a virtual psychologist.³⁵ This chatbot integrates Artificial Intelligence Markup Language (AIML) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to offer targeted psychological assistance and intervention. The primary objective of his study revolves around the development and functioning of the chatbot, particularly the AIML conversational engine and the application of CBT methods to deliver therapy.

³³ Tanya Malik et al., "User Feedback Analysis of an AI-Enabled CBT Mental Health Application (Wysa)," *JMIR Human Factors* 9, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.2196/35668>.

³⁴ Pim Cuijpers dkk., "Cognitive Behavior Therapy Vs. Control Conditions, other Psychotherapies, Pharmacotherapies and Combined Treatment for Depression: A Comprehensive Meta-Analysis including 409 Trials with 52,702 Patients," *World Psychiatry* 22, no. 1 (2023): 105–15, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.21069>.

³⁵ Batyrkhan Omarov dkk., "Artificial Intelligence Enabled Mobile Chatbot Psychologist using AIML and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy," *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications* 14, no. 6 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2023.0140616>.

Chatbots demonstrate significant utility, particularly when evaluated using user-centered design approaches that assess usability, engagement, and emotional impact. Enhanced user-wellbeing in distress and improved emotional levels. As a low cost scalable option, AI-driven chatbots can be fundamental in addressing significant mental healthcare inequalities. These tools can complement traditional therapeutic approaches. This can help mental healthcare providers, and more people can focus on self-managing their mental health. This can more advanced AI tools. Combining AI driven chatbots, CBT techniques to promote bibliotherapy, can significantly modify the illness needs of the mental health care system and promote a more open, user-centered, non-institutional AI system.

Such AI-supported methods can help reduce pressure on traditional mental health services while increasing accessibility for users who may not seek formal care. According to Mcallister (2020) a post interview on a prototype chatbot called Bibliobot to support bibliotherapy that helps the facilitators to locate details about their bibliotherapy group.³⁶ Regarding future addition, facilitators suggest to use chatbot to gathers data, since in typical bibliotherapy session, facilitator use scale questionnaire such as Warwick Edinburgh Mental well being scale (WEMWBS) and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) to obtain data regarding participants well being.

The effectiveness of such AI-powered CBT stretches beyond just a chatbot. Farzan (2024) evaluate the therapeutic effects of AI-driven Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (AI-CBT), for depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions, as well as user engagement and satisfaction. In the study which looked at ten papers—five on Woebot, four on Wysa, and one on Youper—researchers observed substantially reduced symptoms of mental health across all three platforms.³⁷ Woebot achieves significant reductions in depression and anxiety with good user engagement. Likewise, contribute to the significant benefits seen in people with chronic pain or maternal mental health concerns. Some larger releases that had a significant impact included Youper, which contributed to a drop in depression and anxiety symptoms by 48%.

³⁶ P. McAllister et al., "Towards Chatbots to Support Bibliotherapy Preparation and Delivery," dalam *Chatbot Research and Design* (2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39540-7_9.

³⁷ Maryam Farzan et al., "Artificial Intelligence-Powered Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Chatbots, a Systematic Review," *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry*, advance online publication, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.18502/ijps.v20i1.17395>.

The findings from these studies reflect the capabilities of the AI-CBT chatbots. All three of the chatbots proved they were able to build therapeutic alliances with users, resulting in strong satisfaction ratings. The results of these studies illustrate the accessibility and effectiveness of AI-CBT chatbots in mental health care, making them a potential adjunct to psychotherapy. They facilitate the delivery of mental health care in a timely manner; more so in instances when a mental health professional is unavailable since they offer real-time, tailored support. However, the researchers pointed out several possible concerns with the studies, regarding the design of the studies and the narrowness of the samples used.

User feedback emphasizes the importance of the tools even more. One research that adopted a user-centered platform approached the feedback of 7 Heuristic Wysa users obtained from Google Play for 1 year. With the study of the keywords Google users were commenting on, the researchers were able to classify and evaluate the experience in terms of four important dimensions, acceptability, usability, usefulness, and integration. They also identified the leading strengths and weaknesses of the application, and the different user types who get the most value. Overall most users appreciate that the application has multiple and varied activities and exercises, the interface and interactions were designed to be easy to use and the application employed a full-function AI. The reasons listed above were the main reasons a lot of users regarded the application as useful, easy to use. The delicate nature of the application and the ways to interact with it were also noted. Overall, improvement in mental health and easy ways to restructure thoughts were the main reasons listed above as beneficial. The app received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with 84.5% (6,700 out of 7,929) of users giving it a 5-star rating.

Benefits of Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy, a form of expressive art intervention, uses structured reading and guided reflection as therapeutic processes. The term derives from the Greek words *biblio* (book) and *therapeia* (healing). Bibliotherapy uses a person's relationship with books, poetry and other written words to promote healing and personal growth.

The potential contribution of bibliotherapy to the psychotherapy effort for chronic schizophrenia is described with reference to some experimental work carried out in Poland. In the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology in Warsaw, bibliotherapy has been introduced as supportive therapy for these patients. The

meetings are optional, and were scheduled one meeting per week and lasting approximately one hour. The group consists of 15-20 individuals each session, with operations under established guidelines to promote an environment of confidentiality combined with mutual respect. Every session also includes a whiteboard, art supplies, and participant photos to generate discussion, prompt understanding, and further development of ideas. Conversation will be centered around the subject. The sessions integrate narrative techniques grounded in cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and psychodynamic principles. This procedure helps them to control their thoughts and actions more efficiently.³⁸

These findings were also confirmed by a recent study conducted in nursing courses to create a bibliotherapy material based (DBMB) on five subjects including Current Affairs and Politics, Psychological Adjustment, Historical Biographies, HealthCare, and Geriatric Culture. Fifty-four randomly selected single materials from the DBMD to conduct intervention and evaluate its effectiveness in improving the subjective well-being of elderly in the nursing home. Sixty four elderly adults aged 65 and older participated in 6 weeks using a study design of pre and post; data collection was implemented through the Optimism-Pessimism Scale (OPS), as well as by testing with the Memorial University of Newfoundland Scale of Happiness (MUNHS). Results post intervention postscores with regard to the cross tabs participants' optimism subjective well being with ($p < 0.05$) in both OPS and MUNHS. Positive affects and experience went up, negative affects and one's psycho-social drag went down. The reading material successfully induced a more positive attitude and decreased negative emotions, leading to the improvement of general well-being.³⁹

According to Wang (2020) bibliotherapy has been found to contribute positively in mitigating depression, enhancing self-efficacy, coping with problem behaviours, and diminishing anxiety level among informal carers.⁴⁰ Nine randomised controlled trials including 1036 informal carers were identified. Most of the included studies have some bias. There were three methods of

³⁸ Beata Kasperek-Zimowska et al., "The Specificity of the Use of Bibliotherapy as an Element of Psychiatric Rehabilitation in a Group of Patients Suffering from Schizophrenia," *Postępy Psychiatrii i Neurologii* 30, no. 4 (2021): 278–86, <https://doi.org/10.5114/ppn.2021.111946>.

³⁹ H. Zhang et al., "Effects of Developmental Bibliotherapy on Subjective Well-Being of Older Adults Living in Nursing Homes: A Quasi-Experimental Study," *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 60, no. 7 (2022): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20220215-03>.

⁴⁰ S. Wang et al., "The Effects of Bibliotherapy on the Mental Well-Being of Informal Caregivers of People with Neurocognitive Disorder: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 109 (2020): 103643, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103643>.

bibliotherapy. Bibliotherapy was found to have a moderate-large pool effected on lowering depression at $Z = 1.99$ (SMD = -0.74, 95% CI = -1.47 to -0.01, $p = .05$), although the heterogeneity was great ($I^2 = 94\%$). Among the subsets, only video bibliotherapy had a significant effect on depression at $Z = 2.78$ ($I^2 = 83\%$, SMD = -2.11, 95% CI = -3.6 to -0.62, $p = .005$). For carers, the effect of bibliotherapy on self-efficacy in managing difficult behaviours was also small to medium at $Z = 2.44$ ($I^2 = 0$, SMD = 0.36, 95% CI = 0.05 to 0.67; $p = .02$), but there was no significant effect on confidence to access-pause ($I^2 = 0$, SMD = 0.17, 95% CI = -.16 to (.32). Effect for reduction of state anxiety was significant for at $Z = 2.30$ ($I^2 = 22\%$, SMD = -0.22, 95% CI = -0.41 to -0.03, $p = .02$). The effects on reduction of depressive symptoms should be interpreted cautiously given the large amount of variability among studies. The impact effects on a range of mental health outcomes are inconclusive because there are few studies, which indicate more studies are required.

In addition to its use in psychiatric rehabilitation, bibliotherapy has been explored in Hungary to address the spiritual needs of cancer patients. By reading and discussing literature, patients can express their needs both openly and subtly. Participants are able to recognize and examine their own emotions and feelings without external influence or scrutiny. Group participants that are already conscious of their feelings and needs are able to experience group therapy as a safe space to share and are able to receive validation. Patients are able to have their needs met and receive confidence to address previously unmet spiritual needs as they self empower through group Bibliotherapy. The group sessions are able to determine if and how religion and spirituality influence the participant.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

The study underscores the importance of bibliotherapy in supporting the emotional wellbeing of the UNIMAS community. This study concludes that university students face complex emotional issues that librarians and counselors should address and, together, focus on the students' mental well-being. More specific focus on the bibliotherapy books will allow defenders of mental health

⁴¹ Ágnes Bálint and Judit Magyari, "The Use of Bibliotherapy in Revealing and Addressing the Spiritual Needs of Cancer Patients," *Religions* 11, no. 3 (2020): 128, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11030128>.

issues the freedom to empower librarians to supplement mental health bibliotherapy.

The study highlights the necessity of training librarians for the implementation of bibliotherapy as a therapeutic measure recognized within the healing community. Greater integration of bibliotherapy is expected to enhance user satisfaction with supportive reading materials. Given the urgency of the mental health issues in universities, healing literature is an available and often underused therapeutic measure. This study provides a foundation for UNIMAS to develop evidence-based bibliotherapy strategies for mental health support. The study also highlights the potential role of librarians-particularly in public and academic settings in supporting community mental health through curated reading sources.

Training librarians and counselors in bibliotherapy practice enables them to better link clients to bibliotherapy resources. Reading can therapeutically counter loneliness and isolation and also promote self-reflection. There is overwhelming evidence that bibliotherapy is effective for and addresses symptoms of depression and anxiety. Libraries that provide bibliotherapy services improve and sustain individual mental health and promote and sustain a culture of wellness in educational institutions.

New mental health support strategies and a bibliotherapy inclusion advocacy for mental health policy are in order to establish for policy makers a foundational understanding of libraries as mental health supportive community assets.

As a conceptual exploration, this study outlines how bibliotherapy and AI-enabled tools may be integrated into academic library services to promote emotional well-being and community engagement. It presents a vision for what is possible: librarians as first tier responders to mental health crises using literature and technology to provide personalized AI bibliotherapy. From a theoretical perspective, the research addresses the gaps in the literature that considers bibliotherapy, information science and innovative technology in the context of academic libraries.

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